


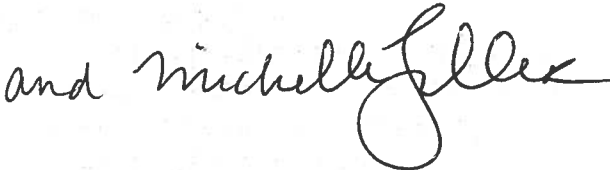
A 'one size fits all' strategy to implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative here in the North Coast Study Region will be ineffective and injurious to sustainable fisheries efforts unless a fundamentally different approach is taken. Unlike much of the rest of our state, a combination of a small population and challenging marine weather conditions impose a natural limit on the impact we have on our marine resources. With the exception of salmonids and deep-water species of rockfish, populations of nearshore rockfish, crab, and abalone remain abundant here.

Current regulations adopted by the California Department of Fish and Game to protect Yelloweye rockfish have already resulted in the closure of over 40% of state waters North of Alder Creek to recreational rockfish fishing. Additionally, the last two years have seen an unprecedented closure of the commercial ocean salmon season, and near complete closure of the recreational salmon season as well, primarily as a result of poor management of our watersheds.

It's time to rethink the strategy of closing nearshore reefs to fishing along the North Coast. There is no evidence to suggest that our nearshore fisheries are overfished. On the other hand, we have plenty of evidence that our impaired watersheds and estuaries no longer provide adequate spawning or rearing habitat for salmonids. Let's allow the science to truly speak to this process as it unfolds along the North Coast of California. Let's turn our efforts to the watershed and estuary restoration work that we already know is crucial to the sustainability of threatened and endangered salmon populations. This is the only logical and science-driven way to proceed with implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative in the North Coast Study Region.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

 and 

Whelan Gilkerson and Michelle Fuller

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